
**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION
EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT
JUNE 2005**

PG&E Topock

The L.A. Times published an article on June 21, 2005, concerning the Ft. Mojave Tribe's lawsuit against PG&E, DTSC, and Metropolitan Water District (MWD) for allegedly violating the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The lawsuit contends the Tribe was inadequately consulted prior to construction of a groundwater treatment plant near portions of the Topock Maze, a site sacred to the Tribe. The treatment plant, scheduled to start up July 16, 2005, will treat groundwater contaminated with chromium as part of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) facility cleanup of the Topock site. The treated groundwater will then be re-injected under Board Order R7-2004-0103, adopted by the Regional Board October 2004.

The Executive Officer expressed concern regarding recent increasing levels of chromium in monitoring well MW-34-100, located sixty feet from the Colorado River. He indicated enforcement actions may be considered if PG&E fails to demonstrate hydraulic control of the contaminated groundwater plume needed to prevent discharge to the Colorado River.

Mission Springs Water District (Jose Angel)

In 2000, Mission Springs Water District (MSWD) submitted a proposal for its Groundwater Protection Project to the SWRCB Proposition 13—Non-Point Source Pollution Prevention (NPSPP) Program. The primary objective of the Groundwater Protection Project is to provide a means to permanently alleviate wastewater discharge from onsite disposal systems (septic tanks) that overlie sensitive groundwater resources throughout the greater Desert Hot Springs area. The Groundwater Protection Project involves abatement of septic tanks and elimination of respective wastewater discharges by extending the MSWD sewer collection system into areas of the region presently dependent upon septic tanks.

Due to the nature of the Groundwater Protection Project, and based on a recommendation from the Regional Board, MSWD was ranked within the top ten of all NPSPP projects and has since received the full amount of funding made available by the Proposition 13 program—a \$4,000,000 grant. In addition to receiving the Prop 13 funds, MSWD secured a federal grant in the amount of \$4,000,000 to help offset the costs associated with construction of sewer main pipelines as well as abatement of septic tanks. In order to satisfy the matching funds requirement set by the state and federal grant programs, MSWD encouraged the community to form a public assessment district. Assessment District 11 was formed in 2000 and serves as an additional matching source in the amount of \$3,300,000.

The Groundwater Protection Project is currently in the third phase of implementation and will initiate the fourth phase when funding commences.

- **Phase I** of the Groundwater Protection Project involved construction of approximately 10,922 linear feet of 8" VCP sewer main and approximately 9,303 feet of 4" VCP sewer lateral to 378 parcels in northwest Desert Hot Springs. MSWD received the first Proposition 13 appropriation of \$600,000 to help offset the costs involved in the construction of Phase I. In addition to the Proposition 13 grant, MSWD allocated \$1,350,000 in matching funds to help complete Phase I of the project. Phase I was successfully completed in 2003 and connected 114 homes to the public sewer collection system.

- **Phase II** of the Groundwater Protection Project involved construction of approximately 25,345 linear feet of 8" VCP sewer main and 16,865 feet of 4" VCP sewer lateral to an additional 502

parcels in northwest Desert Hot Springs. MSWD received a second Proposition 13 appropriation of \$2,200,000, and again, matched the grant with over \$1,500,000. Phase II was successfully completed in 2005 and connected 218 homes to the public sewer collection system.

- **Phase III** of the Groundwater Protection Project involves construction of approximately 15,501 linear feet of 8" VCP sewer main and 9,355 feet of 4" VCP sewer lateral to an additional 339 parcels in northwest Desert Hot Springs. MSWD received a third Proposition 13 appropriation of \$1,200,000, and anticipates matching the grant with over \$2,240,000. Phase III is currently in progress and will require a capital investment of \$2,402,370 dollars (\$1,200,000 from Prop 13 monies and \$1,202,370 dollars from match monies). Phase III is scheduled for completion in March of 2006 and will connect an additional 261 homes to the public sewer collection system, completing the Assessment District 11 portion of the Groundwater Protection Project.
- **Phase IV** of the Groundwater Protection Project, identified as Assessment District 12, will involve construction of approximately 304,500 linear feet of 8" VCP sewer main and 109,355 feet of 4" VCP sewer lateral to an additional 6,600 parcels throughout the greater Desert Hot Springs area. MSWD anticipates ongoing support for Phase IV through various state and federal grant programs, such as the State of California Proposition 40 and 50 water bonds. Phase IV is scheduled to commence when funding by the abovementioned programs is made available to MSWD. Phase IV is projected to connect over 4,000 homes to the public sewer collection system.

Staff is very appreciative of and compliments the MSWD's efforts and accomplishments to phase out the septic systems and protect the area's aquifers. The potential reduction of wastewater estimated to discharge into the regions groundwater for over 20 years from implementing the Groundwater Protection Project will be nearly one billion gallons.

Coachella Sanitary District – Plant Expansion Groundbreaking Ceremony

On May 20, 2005, a Regional Board Member and Regional Board staff, including the Executive and Assistant Executive Officers, attended the groundbreaking ceremony for Coachella Sanitary District's wastewater plant expansion. Celeste Cantu, Executive Director of the State Water Resources Control Board, was the keynote speaker at this well attended event.

The Coachella Sanitary District is expanding its capacity by 3 million gallons per day with this project, and will improve overall effluent quality upon completion. The State Revolving Fund provided a \$23.6 million loan for the project.

Cathedral City Cove

On June 8, 2005, the Cathedral City Cove Improvement District was approved by the City Council, following an election by property owners to form an assessment district. As a result of the approval, the City of Cathedral City will begin construction of a sewer collection system to serve 1,520 properties in the Cove Area by the end of this year. Construction costs for this project are estimated at nearly \$30 million. The Water Boards will contribute \$5.3 million of the total cost from State Proposition 13 grant funds. The purpose of the project is to meet a Regional Board septic tank prohibition that mandates their elimination by January 1, 2012.